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For Immediate Release

MCHD is dealing with several positive COVID-19 cases of individuals who patronized bars

MORGANTOWN, WV (July 1, 2020) — Monongalia County Health Department is currently conducting disease investigation and contract tracing with individuals who visited several downtown bars, including one that has been connected to an outbreak.

"We do not know where these individuals originally came into contact with COVID-19, but we do know that they spent time in at least three bars, if not more, and two of which they described as being "very crowded,'" said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer.

The evening of Wednesday, June 24, was a popular time that these bars were frequented. The bars include Baby Squirrels Saloon, Big Times and The Back Door, all located on High Street in downtown Morgantown. Four of the individuals visited Baby Squirrels on Wednesday; three cases constitute an outbreak.

"Anyone who has visited these bars, especially on the evening of Wednesday, June 24, should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, and if they have any questions, including about whether or not they should quarantine, they should call the health department at 304-598-5100," Dr. Smith said.

Symptoms include shortness of breath, fever, dry cough, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches and loss of smell.

This scenario has emerged in several spots all over the country as many states have experienced a rise in cases. Some of these have been connected to young people going out to crowded places and not necessarily observing the recommended precautions to avoid COVID-19. These include wearing a mask, maintaining a social distance of six feet and washing hands often and thoroughly.

In Monongalia County, the last week or so has been one of the busier times during the pandemic, with 28 new cases reported since Monday, June 22.

"We're definitely seeing an uptick in cases, and many of them are community spread and involve younger people," Dr. Smith said.

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As of Wednesday morning, Monongalia County had 161 positive cases of COVID-19. One month ago, on June 1, Monongalia County had 122 cases. Cases are also rising around the state. On Wednesday morning, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' daily release reflected 2,932 cases.

"We understand that the weather is nice and people are tired of being cooped up in their homes," Dr. Smith said. "Young people, especially, want to get out and see their friends. But people need to understand that we're going in the wrong direction with these COVID-19 cases and the situation will not improve if precautions aren't taken."

This is current Week 10 of Gov. Jim Justice's reopening plan. Officials in some other states have halted or even reversed reopening measures.

"We don't want that to happen here in West Virginia," Dr. Smith said. "We are doing our best to try to control the number of COVID-19 cases, and we are asking the citizens of Monongalia County to do their part and help us out."

Anyone with general COVID-19 questions can call the WVU Medicine COVID hotline at 304-598-6000. More information can also be found at MCHD's COVID-19 web pages, monchd.org/covid-19, monchd.org/covid-19-daily-updates, monchd.org/covid-19- guidance and monchd.org/covid-19-stats. They also can follow MCHD's social media: Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and Instagram at #WVMCHD.

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